

rail spot by Lincoln

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Curios and Relics

Railsplitting Curios

Rail

Split by Lincoln

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

—Some of the fences on the Alfred Gordon farm, near Petersburg, Illinois, are made of rails split by Abraham Lincoln. Mr. Lincoln, while a young man, studied law in Petersburg, and boarded with Alfred Gordon, paying for his board by splitting rails for the farm. Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Green, now of Fountain Green, a village near the line of Hancock and McDonough counties, lived on the Gordon farm at the time Lincoln worked there. They remember him as a clever but awkward youth, whose reputation as a rail-splitter was known throughout the section. 11/19/93

HAS A SOUVENIR OF LINCOLN

Abilene, Kan., Man Owns a Fence Rail
Cut by the Martyred President.

ABILENE, Kan., Jan. 11.—G. W. Hurd, of the firm of Stambaugh & Hurd, of this city, has just returned from a visit to his parents in Galena, Ill., and brings a unique souvenir of Lincoln's early career. Mr. Hurd's father was a delegate to the Chicago republican convention of 1860. Dennis Hanks, in order to boom Lincoln, had arranged behind the rostrum a number of oak rails brought up from central Illinois which had been split by Lincoln while working in the timber. After Lincoln was nominated he was asked if the rails were really split by him. He declared that, while he could not identify them, if Hanks said they were authentic, it was correct. The enthusiastic delegates cut them into one-foot lengths and retained them for souvenirs. Mr. Hurd's has lain in an old bureau, carefully wrapped and labeled, for thirty-five years. He gave it to his son to remain as an heirloom in the family.



LINCOLN RELIC RECOVERED—A black walnut fence rail which Abraham Lincoln is said to have split to pay for ten yards of jean cloth has been recovered from a farm cemetery fence and brought to Indianapolis, where the Misses Yvonne Hoover, left, and Miss Wilda Cooper are seen examining it. The story of the rail was disclosed in the records of the Eakel tavern on the Springfield road, eight miles southwest of Decatur, Ill. Lincoln suffered from frozen feet while studying for law at the tavern and was confined to his room for three weeks. 2-1929

Precious Bits of Wood



MRS. DOROTHY S. TAYLOR

PART OF A RAIL that Abraham Lincoln split, a chip from the log cabin where he was born and a piece from the Ann Rutledge Tavern, where he met his first sweetheart are exhibited by Mrs. Dorothy S. Taylor at Enoch Pratt Free Library. They are displayed in observance of his birthday anniversary next Thursday.

—Baltimore News Staff Photographer.

LINCOLN RAIL TO BE SHOWN

Admirers of Abraham Lincoln, whose birthday anniversary will be celebrated a week from today, may spend an interesting half hour at the Enoch Pratt Free Library, Redwood street and Hopkins place.

On display there are a section of fence rail the Great Emancipator is said to have split, a bit of wood taken from the log cabin in which he was born and a piece of timber from Rutledge Tavern, Old Salem, Ill., where he met Ann Rutledge, his first sweetheart.

These and other Lincolnia were loaned to the library by E. L. Bangs, collector of historical objects.

Another feature of the display is the original Fracker painting of the Lincoln Memorial, valued at \$1,000. It is owned by the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad.

Other objects of interest are a large framed engraving of Lincoln, an enlarged reproduction of his second inaugural address, and a facsimile of the famous Gettysburg address.

Books about Lincoln have a prominent share in the exhibit. One is "I Saw Booth Shoot Lincoln," written by William J. Ferguson, who resided in Baltimore until his death recently.

Baltimore News
2-5-31

Lincoln Fence Splinter Given Mansfield Lawyer

**Attorney C. H. Workman Receives Prized Possession
From Baltimore Historical Collection.**

A SLIVER of old, dry wood, as seasoned as the traditions that cluster about the tall homely rail splitter who first stripped it from virgin forests, has come into the possession of C. H. Workman, Mansfield attorney. The small strip of wood, once a part of a rail fence that was built by young Abraham Lincoln, near Petersburg, Ill., was sent to Mr. Workman by E. L. Bangs, of the Representative-Historical collection at Baltimore, Md. Similar portions of the Lincoln rail are in the possession of the Roosevelt family, Calvin Coolidge and President Hoover.

IT WAS a story by Mr. Workman, entitled "A Visit to St. Gaudens Lincoln" first published in the old Mansfield Journal in 1926, that brought the Lincoln memento to him.

The history of the Lincoln rail is an interesting one. The entire fence, made of rails, had been hauled and built by Lincoln in

his young manhood. During the campaign of 1860, when the Illinois rail-splitter was running for presidency, a group of his most vehement supporters went to Petersburg, tore out three huge rails and brought them to Cario to carry in a great torchlight procession.

ONE of the men took a rail home with him after the parade, kept it, and years after the great Emancipator had been assassinated, cut it into blocks and gave them to his children.

It was from one of these children that the Baltimore collector secured his block of the Lincoln rail. It has since been cut into small fragments and given to collectors of Lincolniana.

Although Mr. Workman's appreciation of St. Gaudens's famous statue and memorial was published more than five years ago, he continues to receive requests from school heads and collectors from all over the United States asking him for copies of it.



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June 20, 1934

Lincoln National Life Foundation,
Ft. Wayne, Indiana.

Gentlemen:

Under separate cover I am sending you by this mail a Lincoln Souvenir made from a cross section of a rail split by Abraham Lincoln on the farm he owned at one time in Coles County Illinois.

This sample sent you is one of the souvenirs sold at the Fair last year. However, any printing desired could be placed on the face of the item.

Please examine this sample, front and back, and let me know if you would be interested in buying a few thousand of them for distribution as you see fit, with any wording you desire.

I am not able to quote prices in large lots until we would see how many we can furnish, but the price would be around twenty cents each.

May I hear from you at your convenience, and oblige,

Yours truly,

Ernest L. White,
Pana, Illinois

Curios Rail Fence

June 26, 1934

Mr. Ernest L. White
Pana, Illinois

My dear Mr. White:

Thank you very much for forwarding us the souvenir of a cross section of a rail said to have been split by Abraham Lincoln on the farm he owned at one time in Coles County, Illinois.

The souvenir is very attractive indeed but the genuineness of the rail must be put in question as there is no evidence of Lincoln ever splitting any rails in Coles County, Illinois, on the farm which he purchased for his parents later in life.

We do have several Lincoln features which we distribute quite widely but I regret we could not see our way clear to make any presentation of a souvenir such as you have sent us.

Very sincerely yours,

Director

LAW:AAM

Rail Split by Lincoln Century Ago Prized



A three-foot section of a walnut rail split by Abraham Lincoln on an Illinois farm more than 100 years ago was placed on display yesterday in the art department of the Hermosa Photo Shop at Hermosa Beach. The rail, in excellent preservation, is the property of J. G. Kennedy of Hermosa. It is said to be the largest memento of its kind outside of a museum and to be of tremendous value. Pictured with the exhibit is Georgia Ann Plummer.

(Maurice Lanfried photo)

2-12-35

Los Angeles Times

Handed Down by Branch of President's Family

Miamian Has Part of Fence Rail, And Proof That Lincoln Split It

By **LAWRENCE THOMPSON**
Herald Staff Writer

A piece of a rail that was split by Abraham Lincoln is the proud possession of Mrs. Sally Rhey Gipson, 618 SW Sixth st., and she has documents which she is certain prove that it is authentic.

She has had a gold plate placed on the piece of red oak, stating that it was part of a rail cut by Lincoln in 1830.

And she has a letter from Clarence Hall, Lerna, Ill., saying that Abe really did the splitting.

Hall is something of an authority, since he built the rail chairs which are in the Ford Museum, Dearborn. These were made from rails which Lincoln also could have split.

Mrs. Gipson even has a letter from the head of the museum in Dearborn attesting that the rails used in the chairs there would be the same kind as those which Lincoln would have split in his youth, and

that they date from that period.

Mrs. Gipson always had been interested in history generally and in Lincoln specifically, and her latter interest has been intensified since she got the piece of split rail in April, 1953.

She has made three trips to Illinois and to other places where Lincoln lived—to check on the authenticity of her piece of rail.

The letter from Hall is the clinching evidence, she says. It states:

"This piece of fence rail was split by Abraham Lincoln in 1830 on the Sangamon river near Decatur, Ill. . . My grandfather, John J. Hall, gave this piece of fence rail to Miss Anna Miller Bean, and it has been handed down through her death to Sally Rhey Gipson . . .

"Anna Miller Bean was my cousin . . . and also a blood relative of my grandfather, John J. Hall . . . I am a great-great-grandson of Sarah Bush Lincoln, stepmother of Abra-

ham Lincoln . . . My mother, Nancy A. Hall, was a great-granddaughter of Sarah Bush Lincoln and also was a blood descendant of Nancy Hawks . . . I made the chairs for the Ford Museum."

Mrs. Gipson owns a Bible published in 1857 that gives records on some of the members of families supposedly related to Lincoln.

She also has a first edition of "The Story of Abraham Lincoln, or the Journey from the Log Cabin to the White House," by Eleanor Gridley, published in 1902, in addition to a second edition of the same work.

Furthermore, she has an autographed copy of a booklet, "Sarah Bush Lincoln, the Mother Who Survived Him," by Charles H. Coleman, of Eastern Illinois State College, published in 1953.

And she has a color picture of Lincoln with a signature on the back indicating it may have belonged to John J. Hall, grandfather of the man who gave Mrs. Gipson the split rail.

Miami Herald Feb. 13, 1955

Rail Split by Lincoln Tops State Mementos of President

Burlington
Vt.
Free Press
2/12/57

By BETTY SPROSTON

Not all of Abe Lincoln's split rails ended up in fences or firewood.

There's one that survived more than 100 years. It's in the Vermont Historical Society Museum in Montpelier.

According to Miss Clara Foltlett of the society staff, the split rail was given them in 1921 by Frank E. Martell. It is duly certified as a true rail, split by the great President.

Vermont has few reminders of Lincoln, who was born 148 years ago today in 1809.

There is Lincoln Village, in Addison County (pop. 577), and Lincoln Mountain in Warren, more than 4,000 feet high.

Whether these landmarks honor the Civil War President is a matter of conjecture.

Other Items

The historical society has other memorabilia of the President, but nothing to make collectors ery with envy.

There is a campaign badge of 1860 containing a picture of Lincoln, and a ballot cast for Lincoln in New Hampshire in 1864.

The collection includes a copy of a death mask of the assassinated President. His signature is on several Vermont draft allot-

ments in the Civil War which are part of the collection.

In the Statehouse in Montpelier, a bust of Lincoln is in the main corridor. It was executed by Larkin G. Mead, a Vermont sculptor.

The Gettysburg Address on a bronze tablet was presented to the state in 1927 to hang in the Statehouse.

Vermonters like to remember that Lincoln's son, Robert, lived for many years in Manchester.

Apparently the inn and streets in Essex Junction were not named for the famous President.

A man named Lincoln operated the Lincoln Inn. He moved to Barton later and operated a hotel there. He died several years ago.

In Burlington, Judge Harry S. Howard of 421 Main St., who has many mementos of the Civil War, said Union street was named for the Union forces in the Civil War.

Not directly connected with Lincoln, but of interest, is the statue of Stephen Douglas in Brandon. Lincoln's adversary was once a resident of this Vermont village.

* CHIP SPLIT BY *
* LINCOLN SHOWN *

* Local Woman Has Memento of *
* Emancipator Given to *
* Delegate in 1860 *

* Coincident with the observ- *
* ance of the birthday anniver- *
* sary of Abraham Lincoln yes- *
* terday, Mrs. R. L. Smith of *
* 4310 Homer street took pride *
* in displaying a small piece of *
* walnut wood chipped from a *
* rail once split by the Emanci- *
* pator. *

* It was given her recently, *
* she stated, by a cousin, Dr. D. *
* K. Green, who was a delegate to *
* the convention which nomina- *
* ted Lincoln for the Presidency *
* in 1860. The rail was brought *
* into the convention hall, she *
* said, and was divided among *
* the admiring delegates. *

FENCE RAIL

A. Lincoln ingraved on it.

Oliver R. Barrett; Cook Sullivan & Ricks

310 S. Michigan Ave.

Chicago, Ill.

